Study Abroad at Middlebury College
Report and Recommendations

Educational Affairs Committee

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1. Why This Report

Introduction

Twenty-five years ago, most Middlebury students who studied abroad majored in a modern language and went to one of the Middlebury Schools Abroad for a year. Today, students in all subjects go abroad to all kinds of programs, more commonly for a semester only. A comparison between the statistics for 1984-85 and 2001-02 reveals general trends.

- In 1984-85, 194 students studied in 23 countries in 54 programs and universities; in 2001-02, there were 351 students studying in 44 countries in 94 different programs and universities.
- Since 1984-85, the percentage of juniors studying abroad has risen over 70% (from roughly 35% of juniors in 1984-85 to 61.3% in 2000-01 and 57.6% in 2001-02).
- In 1984-85, the majority of students who studied abroad (55% in 84-85) went to Middlebury Schools Abroad, but in 2001-02, students enrolled in Middlebury Schools comprised only 36.4% of those studying away from the Vermont campus.

At this point, with roughly 60% of Middlebury graduates spending some time enrolled in an overseas institution, it is, obviously, more typical to study abroad than not. Thus by every measurable standard, Study Abroad has become an increasingly large part of our students' educational experience.

Despite the enormous expansion of Study Abroad, no systematic consideration of its place in our curriculum has taken place during the last quarter century. Over the past year and a half, the Educational Affairs Committee has conducted just such an investigation, and we would like to begin by acknowledging the enormous assistance we received from all the people who took the time to share their expertise with us, in committees or individually. The list is not short: first, our work takes many of its starting-points from the Joint Report on Study Abroad written by the Foreign Language

The body of the report has six sections: 1) an historical overview to explain how Study Abroad and the procedures associated with it have changed in the past twenty-seven years; 2) a consideration of the reasons for Study Abroad; 3) an explanation of the crucial role of academic advisors; 4) an exposition of current procedures involved in Study Abroad; 5) an account of Middlebury's own C. V. Starr Schools; and 6) an outline of how credit is granted. The final five sections each lay out the current state of affairs, point to areas of concern, and make specific recommendations to address our concerns. Most of these recommendations formalize, clarify, or enhance current practice. The report ends with two appendices: a letter we have drafted and would like to see distributed to students contemplating studying abroad; and statistical information compiled by the Office of Off-Campus Study which highlights the growth in Study Abroad.

Historical Background

There are two main paths for students going abroad: 1) the C. V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad, and 2) what are loosely referred to as 'non-Middlebury programs.' They have mostly separate histories.

1. The C. V. Starr-Middlebury Schools Abroad

As noted above, in the mid-1970's the predominant pattern for studying abroad was for students to spend a year at one of the Middlebury Schools Abroad. There were five sites (Florence, Madrid, Mainz, Moscow, and Paris), and the students were mostly majors in modern languages. The Schools in Mainz and Paris had a directorship that rotated among members of the Middlebury College faculty; occasionally a Middlebury College faculty member directed the School in Madrid, and even less frequently the Schools in Florence and Moscow. In addition, one member from each of the five corresponding languages at the Vermont campus also served as the 'Dean' of the relevant School and had full administrative responsibility for admissions, orientation, advising, liaison with the directors of both the summer and the abroad programs, preparation of catalog and other information, housing, and debriefing of students upon their return. The entire system was overseen by the Vice President for Foreign Languages.

screening of language ability, and some coordination of curriculum between the academic year and abroad programs.

2. Non-Middlebury Programs

In the 1970's, only a handful of students went abroad to institutions other than the Middlebury Schools. In order to do so, the students had to apply through a faculty committee, the Programs Abroad Committee (hereafter PAC). This was set up in 1975, and the faculty on the committee considered each application individually. In 1976 Karl Lindholm joined the Dean of Students Office, and one of his responsibilities was to sit with the PAC. As familiarity with institutions increased, it became possible to establish general guidelines (e.g., the minimum GPA required to study abroad). In the early 1980's, Karl put these in writing; they remain the core of our current guidelines.

Study in non-Middlebury programs, however, is the area of Study Abroad that has seen the greatest growth, in part because of student demand, curricular developments, and Middlebury's concomitant promotion of Study Abroad. In the 2001-02 academic year, 63.6% of juniors are in non-Middlebury programs, up from 55% just five years ago and 45% in the mid-1980's. Because the majority of students going abroad now go to non-Middlebury programs and are not necessarily majoring in modern languages, there is a tremendous range in what students study, where they study, and why.

As a result, not just foreign language faculty, but faculty across the curriculum help students to choose programs, sign off on their proposed course of study, decide whether the student can complete major and minor requirements upon returning for the senior year, determine whether courses taken away from Middlebury can count towards a major or a minor, and attempt to integrate the educational experiences of students who go away with those who remain. Given the proliferation of destinations and the recognized benefit of direct enrollment, we as faculty are facing the necessity of making decisions about a seemingly infinite number of unfamiliar institutions, programs, instructors, courses, and course materials. In other words, responsible advising of students who wish to study abroad can be a considerable challenge.

the importance of studying abroad. Study in another setting presents important opportunities for our students to be exposed to challenging educational and residential situations not offered on the Vermont campus.

Concerns

The growth in numbers of juniors going abroad and the shift away from studying at one of Middlebury's Schools Abroad mean that we have more students going away and with a greater range of motivations. The general impression we received from students is that they feel entitled to study abroad, regardless of their academic program.

Given that our students assume that studying abroad is a part of the curriculum that needs no justification, it is all the more important for them to articulate for themselves as well as for their advisors precisely how a specific program of study will enhance their undergraduate education. For this reason, we think it is essential that students be able to provide what our literature uniformly refers to (but never defines) as "a compelling academic rationale" for studying away from the Vermont campus.

Recommendations

1. The literature given to students by OCS and by departments and programs should emphasize that the primary purpose for studying abroad is academic. This academic reason needs to justify time away from the residential and educational experience at Middlebury. A compelling academic rationale means that the student will be taking courses that meet one or more of the following criteria:

    a. The courses are not offered at Middlebury but are rigorous and appropriate to a liberal arts education;

    b. The courses are not offered at Middlebury but are rigorous and appropriate to the student's major(s);

    c. The courses are the equivalent of Middlebury courses but are unique in perspective;

    d. The courses may or may not be offered at Middlebury but are unique in perspective because they involve study of the natural history, economics, history, politics, or culture of the region where the school is situated.

the process of completing their study abroad applications, the middle of sophomore year may be too late to engage in the most effective curricular planning. Faculty advisors often are ill equipped to help students with this process, particularly if their department or program has not developed recommendations for integrating on-campus and off-campus study.

The second concern is that the quality of advising that students receive about particular programs or institutions abroad is so uneven. OCS has more information about Middlebury Schools Abroad than about other programs. Some students wishing to study in a non-Middlebury program report that they feel overwhelmed by the process of finding an institution abroad with a curriculum that is suited to their needs. Some departments have made concerted efforts to gather information about the best institutions for studying abroad in their field. Faculty in some other departments have little knowledge about the many programs and institutions available to students, and students who wish to study in these areas of the curriculum are left to choose their destination and program of study with little direction from faculty. Because these students will spend some or all of their junior year studying away from the Middlebury campus, many of them will complete a significant portion of their college coursework elsewhere, and many of these students want to take courses that will count towards their major requirements. Students who must choose a Study Abroad destination, institution, and/or coursework without informed guidance from the faculty cannot be expected to get the most out of their academic experience.

Recommendations

1. Advising regarding a student's study abroad experience should begin early, preferably in the student's first year. First Year Seminar advisors should encourage students to be the architects of their college education and ask whether and where Study Abroad fits into this academic structure. Advisors should stress the importance of advance planning. For example, those students who are considering spending some or all of their junior year abroad should be encouraged to take this into account when selecting their courses.

2. OCS should be charged with developing better information on the non-Middlebury schools abroad.

4. Existing Procedures

Current Practices

Applying to study abroad is a complex process, involving OCS staff, advisors, and language faculty. The Office of Off-Campus Study holds a series of informational meetings in the spring and fall for first and second-year students who are considering Study Abroad their junior year. At these meetings, students learn the steps they must take to apply for Study Abroad, as well as the requirements. Foreign language departments, for instance, set standards for language proficiency. The College requires a minimum overall GPA of B- and an average of B or better in the major and in the language or in the discipline in which the study abroad program is to be primarily undertaken.

When, as a result of their consultations and discussions with OCS and their academic advisors, students have made a decision about where to study, they fill out a form supplied by OCS that is entitled "Application to Study Abroad," which includes or requires: A) Major Advisor's Approval Form; B) Language Assessment Form; C) Essay of 300-500 words giving the academic reasons for seeking to study abroad. (Students who are majors in a modern language, IS, or IP&E and who study abroad for the full year do not have to submit such an essay.) Students take this form, with the essay if required, to their major advisor, seeking his or her support for Study Abroad. If the student is going to a country whose language is taught at Middlebury, the student also sees his or her most recent language instructor at Middlebury for an assessment of language proficiency. If the student plans to study in a country where there is no Middlebury School Abroad, but will be studying in a language taught at Middlebury, he or she must also seek the approval of the relevant language department chair. The deadline for submitting the application materials to the major advisor is about three weeks before it is due in the OCS, thus allowing time for the advisor to request revisions of the essay and of the plan of study.

bring back to their advisor, and/or chair, complete information on the courses to be considered for such credit, i.e., syllabi, assignments, bibliographies, examinations, and written work. At many institutions abroad, the schedule of courses being offered is not definite until the student arrives, and students find that they have to make decisions on the spot about which courses to take. Some foreign language departments felt that they did not have sufficient input into language study for students who were minors in the language. The evaluation forms that students fill out do not seem to be adequate in evaluating the academic experience of the students who have studied abroad, and, generally, these forms are not as readily available to advisors as they might be.

Recommendations

1. Faculty should no longer be charged with certifying that courses identified on a student's Study Abroad application are liberal arts courses. Most faculty do not realize that this is what they are doing by initialing a student's tentative course choices on the application form. This responsibility should instead be given to OCS, which is already responsible for certifying the institutions from which our students can receive credit.

2. OCS should change the Study Abroad application form so that it is clear that students seeking to apply courses taken overseas toward their major, minor, distribution or culture/civilization requirements will need such courses individually approved by the appropriate department chair upon return. Students must bring back all syllabi, bibliographies, assignments, examinations and written work to support such claims. The application form should also make it clear that the student should consult with the department or program chair prior to study abroad in order to ascertain whether there is even a possibility that the courses to be taken might be applied toward the major, minor, distribution, or culture/civilization requirements.

3. When a student requests an application for Study Abroad, he or she should be given the attached "Letter to Students Considering Study Abroad," or, the information in the letter should be incorporated into the Study Abroad Application form.

4. Foreign language departments should have a say in vetting language study overseas, particularly for those who have a minor in the foreign language.

5. Since schools abroad do not always post their schedule of courses until very late, or make changes at the last minute, students should be required to be in contact by e-mail with their academic advisor and OCS in order to

and faculty from relevant departments (e.g., the School in Florence offers courses in art history as well as in Italian language, literature, and history because it is a regular destination for majors in the History of Art and Architecture). Students who study at the autonomous site can also enroll at the local university. For instance, in Paris, students take some courses at the 'autonomous site,' but they also take courses at one of the University of Paris campuses.

The satellite sites of the Middlebury Schools Abroad are select universities with which Middlebury has a formal agreement. At these institutions, the College's responsibility is limited to facilitating the students' ability to enroll in courses. Support is administrative and logistical. These university courses make no or few accommodations to non-native students, who must integrate themselves directly into courses, with differing levels of tutoring support available. Since Middlebury has no say in which faculty are hired, and what courses are taught, there is no specific control over either curriculum or faculty. The residential Director of the Middlebury School Abroad in that country and regular Middlebury College faculty in Vermont do their best to identify appropriate courses for students who choose this option.

Concerns

The current system, with five autonomous sites and nine satellites, has grown beyond the ability of any one individual to have a comprehensive knowledge of the curriculum. The growing number of students with some kind of international major means that an increasing number of faculty, beyond the modern language departments, have direct interests in the curriculum of the Schools Abroad. These changes, intensified by the administrative reorganization of the French and German Schools Abroad, means that all the Schools Abroad are in a period of transition and require further time and attention.

At the autonomous sites, there is a wide range in the degree of collaboration and communication between Middlebury College faculty and the residential Directors of the Schools Abroad. When the Director has a strong historic relationship with the College and the department, understands the Middlebury curriculum, and hires faculty abroad

2. We recommend that the Director of OCS and the DLSA ensure close contact between department and program chairs, or designates, and Directors of Schools Abroad. Contact between the Directors and the language department chair is especially crucial. Directors need to familiarize themselves with the Middlebury stateside curriculum and with departmental policies on Study Abroad. To advise students, departments (particularly language departments) need to know what curricular changes are proposed for the following academic year with sufficient advance notice to allow for effective consultation and solutions. To this end, we recommend that the Directors of each School Abroad make annual visits to Middlebury, during which they meet with the entire faculty who have special interests and needs in the School Abroad that the Director represents. The primary purpose of these visits should be to ensure that these Directors have firsthand experience with the faculty here as well as with Middlebury's curricular and pedagogical needs and emphases.

6. Transfer of Credit

Current Practice

As part of the EAC's discussion of Study Abroad, we reviewed the current policies and procedures for awarding course credit when students return to campus, and considered more generally the College's policies for allowing students to accumulate course credits earned elsewhere towards a Middlebury College degree. Some of the current policy is summarized on page 66 (chapter 3, section IV.A.) of the *Handbook*: "All course work completed off campus, whether in the U.S. or abroad, must receive final approval by the Director of Off-Campus Study. When courses are transferred, the credit is recorded, but not the grade that was awarded. Transfer grades do not count towards the student's G.P.A."

We include here all of our recommendations on transfer of credit, even though some affect areas other than Study Abroad. These recommendations will be presented to the faculty as a free-standing proposal in the fall.

discretion of the department or program, AP exams may be counted as 1 or 2 credits. Some departments require the student to take a Middlebury course before AP credit is awarded. Currently, there is no limit to the number of AP credits that a student may count toward the degree. AP credits may be used to satisfy a maximum of two of the distribution and cultures and civilizations requirements. AP credits may also be used to reduce a student's course load. For each of the past five years (1997-2001), about 60% of the incoming class arrived with AP credits. Among this group, the average number of AP credits has increased every year from 3.2 in 1997 to 4.1 for 2001.

3. Courses taken at other U.S. institutions

Courses taken at other U.S. institutions, during the summer or the regular academic year, may be transferred for academic credit. A *Transfer of Credit Form* is supposed to be completed prior to enrolling in the course in order for a student to obtain preliminary approval for equivalency or for general credit. (Junior college courses are acceptable for transfer as long as the student is not a junior or a senior, but exceptions are allowed.) Such courses are generally above the introductory level and according to page 66 (chapter 3, section IV.A.) of our *Handbook* "carry at least three semester-hour credits or five quarter-hour credits." These courses must meet for at least the same number of class hours as an equivalent course at Middlebury. Students may transfer two courses per summer session and a maximum of four courses over two summer sessions and must carry at least a C- in the course to be transferred. Transfer credits may be used to satisfy distribution and cultures and civilizations requirements if the course is considered the equivalent of a Middlebury College course, as determined by the Middlebury department that offers the course.

Concerns

On Study Abroad

Study abroad is considered a significant element of a Middlebury College education, but grades are only recorded for courses taken at Middlebury Schools Abroad. This policy seems inconsistent, since regular Middlebury College faculty teach neither at Middlebury's Schools Abroad nor at the non-Middlebury programs.

The recommendations on Advanced Placement credits will take effect with students entering Middlebury in September 2003. The Administration Committee shall be responsible for oversight of this policy, and the Registrar shall inform students of all policies on Advanced Placement credits.

Transfer Credits

7. After students matriculate at Middlebury College, they may not take junior college courses for credit towards a Middlebury College degree.

8. OCS should revise the *Transfer of Credit Form* so that it very clearly stipulates that courses taken at other U.S. institutions always require approval in advance if they are to be considered for credit toward the Middlebury degree. The form should also make it clear that no credit will be granted after the course is taken unless the student has secured such preliminary approval. As with Study Abroad courses, students seeking to apply these credits toward the major, the minor, or the cultures/civilizations requirement, will need to seek the approval of the appropriate department chair. To support such requests, students must submit syllabi, bibliographies, assignments, examinations and written work.

> ability to complete a major program, particularly if the student is pursuing a joint or double major. Departments and programs cannot predict with accuracy eighteen months in advance whether or not, and when, particular courses will be offered that the student may need in order to complete the requirements for his or her major program.]

Students seeking to apply courses taken overseas toward their major, minor, distribution or culture/civilization requirements will need such courses individually approved by the appropriate department chair upon return. Students must bring back all syllabi, bibliographies, assignments, and written work to support such claims. The student should consult with the department or program chair prior to Study Abroad in order to ascertain whether the courses to be taken might be applied toward the major, minor, distribution, or culture/civilization requirements.

1984-85: 83 (42%)/33 (17%)/78 (41%)

3. Middlebury Programs/non-Middlebury Programs:

2001-2002 - 135 (36.4%)/236 (63.6%)

2000-2001 - 174 (41.7%)/243 (58.3%)
1999-2000 - 134 (37.3%)/225 (62.7%)
1998-99 - 145 (41.1%)/208 (58.9%)
1997-98 - 161(45%)/194(55%)
1996-97 - 119(39%)/186(61%)
1995-96 - 120 (44.4%)/164 (55.6%)
1994-95 - 110 (41%)/151 (59%)
1993-94 - 130 (44%0/164 (56%)
1992-93 - 127 (46.5%)/147 (53.5%)

1984-85 - 106 (55%)/88 (45%)

* Changed method of calculation as of 97-98: Students on two programs (different programs fall and spring) are counted as being abroad for the year rather than being double-counted for each semester.

** Numbers of programs are counted rather than numbers of actual students; therefore, the total appears larger than the total in #1.